

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

ferred in their tenor. The British note approved in principle of the Iranian request to evacuate Dizful, Khorramabad, and Kermanshah and expressed readiness to discuss these withdrawals with the Iranians; it promised that Iranian administration in occupied provinces would continue; and it expressed willingness to consider the return to Iranians of captured war equipment as well as the payment of indemnity upon the final evacuation of British troops.

The Soviet note, in contrast, refused any alteration of the Soviet occupation line; it refused to accept the request to separate the Soviet troops from the people of Iran; it expressed appreciation of Iranian willingness to reach a new agreement with regard to Kavir-Khurian oil deposits; and it refused any payment of indemnities or the return of captured arms and munitions.

By its note of September 8 the Iranian government accepted the Allied terms and stated that there could be no pretext for occupying Teheran. Meanwhile the rounding up of Axis nationals was well under way. They were handed over to British and Soviet forces and sent either to Russia or to India. Eventually Iran was asked by the Allies to expel the Bulgarian Legation as well (not previously included in the list because of Soviet hope that Bulgaria could be saved from the Nazi clutches). Later a request came to cancel the pouch and code privileges of the French and Japanese legations and to break off formal diplomatic relations with all the Axis countries.

There was a certain amount of confusion in connection with the arrest and internment of Axis nationals. This, as we know from the preceding chapter, permitted some Nazi agents to escape and con-

tinue their secret activity in Iran. The Iranian government could not, however, be blamed for it. In fact, it co-operated loyally with the Allies in this respect. The blame should be put rather at the door of the Allies, who failed to formulate clear-cut demands from the outset. Their notes asked first for expulsion of the Germans by the Iranian authorities, and only later insisted on the internment of all Axis nationals by the Allied forces. Their hesitation in occupying Teheran permitted a large number of Germans to escape from the provinces to the capital and to seek refuge in the German Legation. It was reported that the number of those seeking diplomatic asylum exceeded nine hundred. The evacuation of Axis diplomatic missions